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Concealment of Jewish Origin Shows Lack of Self-Respect and National Consciousness

Jew is Beginning to Assert Himself in the Musical Spheres and to Establish Paramount Position

For almost two thousand years has Israel been wandering all over the globe, being driven from one country to another. During that time the map of the world has frequently been altered, but the Jew still remains in the paradoxical position of being a citizen of the world and yet having no country of his own. While such is the case in the Jew's relation to the political world, it is somewhat different in his relations to the musical world. Admitting that music although cosmopolitan in the larger sense, is divided into schools representing the different nations, the Jew has left a large and indelible mark upon the map of the musical world, writes the "Musical Leader."

So far the Jew, although he has contributed more than his share to the world's collective wealth or music, has rarely been bold enough to claim any part thereof as his own. On rare occasions some one takes the initiative of giving him credit for his contribution, but immediately a number of self-styled musical scholars appear on the scene and attempt in the face of all irrefutable facts to deny the existence of Jewish music. However, the Jew at last has become determined to

assert himself in musical spheres and to establish his position in music among the nations of the earth. Individual and collective attempts are being made both here und in Europe to place Jewish music in the limelight and to familiarize the music loving public with its beauty and originality.

An organization for the purpose of promoting Jewish music has been organized in Petrograde, which consists of some of the most renowned musicians in Russia. As a result of their activity they have recently published a volume of folk songs containing some songs said to be at least two hundred years old. Another collection of Jewish folk songs and national songs were recently published by Ginsburg and Marek, in Warsaw. Dr. Ideixon, of Berlin, also published a volume of Jewish folk songs and classical compositions in Hebrew in German. Lee Winz, of Berlin, the famous librophil. has accumulated copies of rare old traditional melodies and folk songs. Under the auspices of the latter, concerts of Jewish folk songs and Hebrew traditional melodies are arranged in the bigger cities of Germany and the generally well patronized and receive a friendly criticism at the hands of the German press.

In this country, naturally, having more scope and larger opportunities, the Jew's activity along this line is spreading rapidly. Platon Bronnoft

has collected more than three hundred folk songs, fifty of which he published in one volume, Cantor Cahan has also published two volumes of folk songs, and Henry L. Gideon, the Boston organist and Mary Antin are about to complete their collection of folk songs. Furthermore, Mr. Gideon, with the assistance of his wife, frequently gives concerts of Jewish folk songs at concert halls, churches and private musicales.

The promoters of Jewish music in New York are so zealously active in presenting it that it is no rare thing to see two or three numbers in a program of our city park bands. Yes, it even finds its way once in a while to the program of Carnegie and Aeolian halls, in New York. Not long ago Alma Gluck sang a Jewish song by Maurice Ravel at a Sunday evening concert at the Metropolitan Opera House. Elfrem never fails to include in his program his "Hebrew Melody and Dance" which he built on the thesis of an old folk song. Kurt Schindler is another lover of Jewish folk songs. Programs exclusively of Hebrew music have been presented by Cantor Sirota at Carnegie Hall, New York, and Cantor Steinberg at Symphony Hall, Boston. The People's Music league has a number of artists on its staff who sing traditional melodies in the concerts at the public schools. Besides, among the Jewish people a feverish craving for Jewish music is now in vogue. In towns in the United States, where there is a Jewish population, no matter how small, they are forming singing societies and glee clubs, and concerts of Jewish music are

always well patronized.

That the Jews are a musical people no one will deny. The only objection some of the antagonists in the Jewish music have to offer is that they fail to find its ethnological origin. But origins do not more affect our music than they do our customs and institutions. Let the investigator trace our music to some non-Jewish source if he will. For us our music will retain all the Jewish quality with which it has been invested by sacred association. Even if we grant that the larger part of our melodies were derived from different ages and peoples nevertheless, they are Jewish in the sense that they symbolize and express the Jew's holiest sentiments, his saddest misfortunes and tribulations, as well as this Jewish music records the subtlest notions which swayed the Jew's heart during his life-long struggle and it was called into being by Jewish tears, faith and meditation. For centuries our music has comforted the Jewish heart thru all the persecutions, and it still renders a similar service today to the afflicted of our race, be it in the pale of Russia or the ghetto in New York.

The sudden activity and enthusiasm has stimulated among Jews makes one more hopeful than ever, that the day is not far off when a Jewish composer, musician or singer will not have to change his name to conceal his origin, in order to enhance his chances of recognition and

ultimate success. The ostracism to which some of our big lights, such as Rubinstein. Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Halevy and Offenbach were subjected on account of their Mosaic descent is a matter of history. But their genius was so great that it fully overshadowed all anti-Semitic prejudices and their names remain to be honored by the very offspring of those who despised them.

However, in the different countries of Europe, as well as in this country, our Jewish musical geniuses are claimed as products of that particular country: the Germans claim Mendelssohn; the Russians, Rubinstein, the French, Meyerbeer. Halevy.

Offenbach, Ravel and others, because those men were born in those countries. It is true that some of them were converted Jews but in those days conversion of a Jewish musician simply meant a self-advancement on the Material basis of life, but had nothing to do with the spiritual aspect.

The fact is that today since the world has grown broader and more tolerant, we do not hear of any such conversions. Men like de Pachmann, Ravel. Jadlowker. Elman, Zimbalist and many others are proud of their nationality to the extent that they declare themselves at all times loyal sons of Israel. It certainly takes some courage even in these days for anti-Semitism to still rise in some quarters, to come out

openly as a child of a much abused race. On the other hand, these men are so big that they are beyond injury at the hands of those who still cling to the ideas which are remnants of barbarism in this enlightened age.

We often see certain artists billed as "The Irish Tenor," "The Belgian Violinist," "The Polish pianist." Why shouldn't we also see "The Jewish Violinist, Pianist, or Singer"? If those artists are proud of being advertised in that manner by virtue of their respective countries being subjected to oppression and tyranny, surely our people have been persecuted and tortured more than all the rest combined.

Again, if they prefer to be known as sons of their respective countries because they have given the world a large number of musical geniuses, surely we have given our share.

As long as our artists are still compelled either for professional reasons or thru their own lack of self-respect and national consciousness to conceal their nationality, it will be impossible to obtain a complete list. Whenever one of our big artists appear at the Metropolitan or Carnegie halls, our people turn out in large numbers to greet them, and, therefore, there is no reason why these artists in return for our patronage should not honor us by upholding their nationality and give the fact of their Jewish origin due publicity.